Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Lieb, C.S. 1991. *Dendrophidion nuchale.*

Dendrophidion nuchale (W. Peters)
Black-naped Forest Racer

Herpetodryas nuchalis W. Peters, 1864:285. Type-locality, "Caracas, [Venezuela]." Syntypes (2), Zoologisches Museum, Berlin, now lost, collected by Gollmer (not examined by author). Neotype (designated by Lieb, 1988), National Museum of Natural History (USNM) 129579, adult male, collected by J.A. Amberson, E. Schwarz and H. K. Schwarz, 20 July 1950, at Camp Rafael Rangel, Aragua Prov., Venezuela (examined by author).

Drymobius dendrophis (part): Boulenger, 1894:15.

Dendrophidion clarkii Dunn, 1933:78. Type-locality, "El Valle de Anton, Panama." Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 34878, adult male, collected by E.R. Dunn, August, 1932 (not examined by author).

Dendrophidion nuchalis: Lieb, 1988:166.

Dendrophidion nuchale: See Etymology.

• **Content.** No subspecies are currently recognized.

• **Definition.** *Dendrophidion nuchale* is a large species of *Dendrophidion* reaching a maximum known total length of about 153 cm. The species is characterized by 17 dorsal scale rows anteriorly and 15 posteriorly. All rows are keeled at midbody in adults, except in Venezuelan populations, where the first row is smooth. The ventral scales range from 153-175, subcaudals from 132-163. The cloacal scute may be divided or entire. The dorsocaudal scale row reduction from eight to six scales occurs between subcaudals 28-71. The hemipenes are equipped with two to four large, basal spines.

The ground color of the dorsum typically changes from green, gray, or brown anteriorly to dark gray, brown, or black posteriorly; the dorsal surface of tail may be light tan or reddish. The venter is white or yellow, with suffusions of dark pigment on the lateral and medial margins of the ventral scales in adults. The anterior dorsum has narrow, faint crosslines or is patternless; the posterior dorsum is often boldly marked with pale ocelli or crossbands enclosing ocelli. The tail may be patterned as is the posterior dorsum or may be uniform.

Map. Solid circle represents type locality of neotype, and open circles indicate other localities. The approximate geographic range is suggested by the shaded area; some of the apparent discontinuities may be an artifact of indadequate sampling.

• **Diagnosis.** *Dendrophidion nuchale* may be distinguished

Figure. Adult *Dendrophidion nuchale* from Cajón de Palmar Norte, Puntarenas Prov., Costa Rica. Photograph by R. W. Van Devender.

from all other members of the genus by its dark nuchal collar, and in northern Central America, by a reddish-brown tail that contrasts with the ground coloration of the body. Additional diagnostic character states, shared with at least one other congener (nominal taxa in parentheses), include: dorsocaudal scale row reduction from eight to six rows occurring posterior to subcaudal 29 (*D. dendrophis*, *D. vinitor*); and suffusions of dark pigment along the margins of ventral scales in adults (*D. brunneum*, *D. paucicarinatum*).

• **Descriptions.** An overall description and table of variation for the species is in Lieb (1988). Descriptive data on other specimens are reported in the following: Peters (1863, description of *Herpetodryas nuchalis*); Dunn (1933, holotype of *Dendrophidion clarkii*); Dunn (1944, as *D. percarinatus*, in part); Roze (1952, as *D. dendrophis*); Aleman (1953, as *D. dendrophis*); Roze (1959, as *D. percarinatus*); Test et al. (1966, as *D. percarinatus*); Wilson (1966, as *D. vinitor*); McCoy (1970, as *D. vinitor*); Lancini (1979, as *D. percarinatus*); and Wilson and Meyer (1985, as *D. clarki*).

• **Illustrations.** A color photograph of the this species appears in Roze (1970, as *D. percarinatus*); a black-and-white photograph of the neotype is in Lieb (1988).

• **Distribution.** *Dendrophidion nuchale* is distributed disjunctly through lowland and premontane rainforest areas (and associated remnants) in Central America and northeastern and northwestern South America over an elevational range of 125-1500 m. The northern Central America distribution is represented by widely separated localities in Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. In lower Central America, populations west of the Isthmus of Panamá are for the most part restricted to upland areas, and extend to north-central Costa Rica; the species is found east of the Isthmus in lowland and inland regions from the Darien south into the Chocó of Colombia and adjacent Ecuador. Disjunct from these populations are those in the Cordillera de la Costa and associated ranges in northern Venezuela.

• **Fossil Record.** None.

• **Pertinent Literature.** Notes on food habits and distribution in Venezuela are Roze (1952, as *D. dendrophis*) and Lancini (1979, as *D. percarinatum*). Prior the review of variation, distribution, and relationships by Lieb (1988), and by his premature advice (in litt.), three regional treatments utilized the name *D. clarki* (sic) for this species (Henderson and Hoevers, 1975; Wilson and Meyer, 1982, 1985). Subsequent literature using *D. nuchalis* includes the abbreviated checklist of Wilson (1983), the checklist and key in Savage and Villa (1986), and the bibliographic compliation of Villa et al. (1988).

• **Etymology.** The original name *nuchalis* is an adjectival form of the Middle Latin noun *nucha* (nape) formed by the addition of the Latin suffix *-alis* ("pertaining to"). The describer may have been intending to draw attention to the characteristic dark brown or black nuchal collar of this species. Used here for the first time, the ending *-e* is appropriate for a Group B adjective in agreement with the neuter generic name.

• **Comment.** *Dendrophidion nuchale* has long been confused with *D. percarinatum* Cope, a mostly lower Central American and Chocoan species with nearly congruent ventral and subcaudal scale variation. Many, but not all, literature references to the latter species (e.g, Dunn, 1944; Daniel, 1949; Roze, 1966, 1970) pertain in whole or in part to *D. nuchale*.

Whereas Peters and Orejas-Miranda (1970) recognized *Dendrophidion clarkii* Dunn as a valid species, they did not realize the extent of the its South American distribution, nor that the earlier name *nuchalis* (considered a junior synonym of *Dendrophidion dendrophis*) was thus applicable. Moreover, because of the undetected variation in color pattern and anal scute condition, their identification key to members of the genus is seriously flawed (as suggested by Vanzolini, 1986). Lieb (1988) resurrected this species from the synonomy of *Dendrophidion dendrophis*, and because of the nomenclatural confusion over the identities of named taxa in the genus, designated a neotype to replace the apparently lost syntypes of *Herpetodryas nuchalis*.

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Carl S. Lieb, Laboratory for Environmental Biology, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas, 79968-0519.

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